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AN INSCRIBED TOMB AT BEIT JIBRIN

The modern village of Beit Jibrin lies about midway on the route leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. It is the successor of the ancient Mareshah (Greek, Marissa) whose site was close at hand. Many remains bear witness to the important part that this locality has played in the history of the Shephêlah from the earliest times. In 1902 Dr. John P. Peters and Dr. Hermann Thiersch discovered here two remarkable painted tombs, one of which, at least, belonged to members of a Sidonian colony that lived at Marissa during the third and second centuries B.C.¹

In May, 1913, I chanced upon another tomb in the immediate neighborhood that seems to belong to the same period. At the time I was in search of an additional painted tomb that was reported to have been recently unearthed and rifled by the natives.² Being unable to gain any information as to its whereabouts from local guides I began a systematic examination of the many tombs adjacent to the so-called "Tomb of the Musicians," one of those discovered by Dr. Peters and Dr. Thiersch. Nothing of interest was met with until we reached a point on the hillside above the main valley, about one hundred yards beyond the last named tomb. Here, upon crawling through a hole under a stone that seemed suspended in a somewhat dangerous poise, we suddenly found ourselves in an unusually spacious chamber.³ It is cut out of the soft limestone that is characteristic of this district and has the form of an oblong room with a flat roof, its length being 8.94 m. on the one side, and 9.12 m. on the other, while its width ranges from 3.7 m. at

¹ A full description of these tombs, and of others discovered at the same time, is given in *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa*, published by the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1905.

² An account of this painted tomb, which was afterwards found, has been given in the second number of *Art and Archeology*, July, 1914.

³ A limekiln of comparatively recent date will serve for some time as a landmark for locating this tomb, which is about half-way down the hillside below the kiln.

the front to 3.41 m. at the back. The height is about 2 m. at the rear, the only point where measurements are possible because of the débris. The marks of the picks and chisels that were used in the work of excavation can be seen in the accompanying photographs.

Loculi are cut in all the walls as shown in the diagram (Fig. 1). There are two in the entrance wall, ten on either side, and three at the rear, in all twenty-five. With one exception (16) they have the gabled roof that has been found to be characteristic of tombs at Beit Jibrin in contrast to the horizontal or arched roof that is usual in the case of loculi elsewhere in Palestine. Whether 16 was left with a square top for some particular purpose

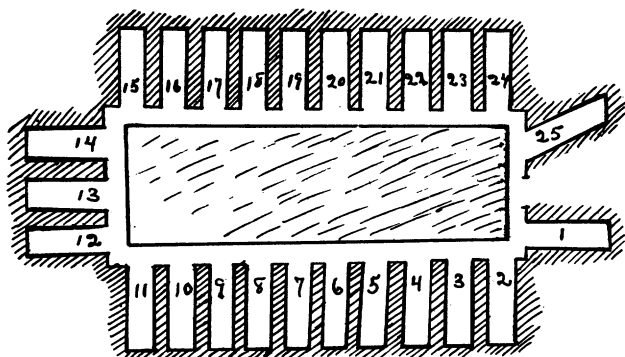


FIGURE 1.—PLAN OF TOMB AT BEIT JIBRIN

was not determined. Another peculiarity worthy of note is the angle at which loculus 25 diverges. This departure from the usual plan may possibly be accounted for by the danger of penetrating a neighboring tomb. The loculi that were measured ranged in width from 70 cm. to 78 cm. at the bottom and 66 cm. to 70 cm. at the top, and in height from 1.31 m. to 1.43 m. The excess of height over breadth is another feature that distinguishes the loculi of Beit Jibrin. In the first photograph it can be seen that they are not cut down to the level of the tomb floor, but to that of a bench 50 cm. wide and 40 cm. high, that probably extends around the entire tomb. Considerable parts of it are now concealed by débris. Such benches are common to the best executed tombs of this type at Jerusalem, Gezer, and Beit Jibrin. In a few of the loculi bones were visible, that had been stirred up and scattered in the search for antiquities.

The top of the flat-linteled door of the tomb is just below the ceiling and has a width of about one metre. The entrance is so blocked and concealed by débris that its form and that of the outer court can be determined only after excavation. The material littering the floor of the tomb consists in large measure of the fragments of slabs used in closing the loculi. The brown clay mortar employed in this connection can be seen in the photographs still adhering to the outer edges of some of the openings.

All the inscriptions that could be found are traced with this same brown mortar. There are no decorations. After a loculus had been closed, it seems to have been the custom for the workmen to use the material at hand for recording the name of the departed. This was not always done. So too the length of the inscription and the addition of the date of burial were apparently optional, unless possibly the eminence of the deceased was the deciding factor. The photographs that are here presented are all that it was possible to obtain. Otherwise I am dependent in that which follows upon such transcriptions as could be hastily made on the occasion of two visits. At several important points I have not been able to decipher the letters with certainty.

(1) On the left side-wall as one enters the tomb, over loculus 3 and extending over 4:

Κ ΖΉΣ ΑΒΟΥΣΤΗC
ΑΠΟΜΟΔΩΡΟΥ

Λ(?)ζι(?)ρ(?) Σαβούς τῆς Ἀπολλοδώρου

"In the year 117. (The grave) of Sabo the daughter of Apollodorus."

It seems probable either that the first character is Λ, or that it represents ζῆρος. Possibly the date should be read 197. A Sabo, the daughter of Sesmaios and another, described as the daughter of Kosnatanos, are mentioned in Tomb I of Dr. Peters and Dr. Thiersch.¹ Apollodorus was buried in loculus 25 at the right of the entrance and may possibly have been the head of the family that constructed the tomb (see below). Sabo occurs as an Edomite and Nabatean name.²

¹ *Loc. cit.* pp. 40 and 54.

² *Loc. cit.* p. 41.

(2) Over loculus 5 (see Fig. 2):

ΕΤΟΥΣ ΕΙΡ
ΑΝΤΙΦΙΛΟΥΤΟΥ
ΔΙΩΝΥΣΙΟΥ

"Ετους ει(?)ρ Ἀντιφίλου τοῦ Διω(?)ν(?)υσίου

"In the year 115. The grave of Antiphilus the son of Dionysius."

As can be seen in the photograph the second letter of the date is somewhat indistinct. The name Antiphilus was borne by one



FIGURE 2.—INTERIOR OF TOMB

of the accomplices of Antipater in his plotting against Herod.¹ In the case of the last name the mortar above the apex of the loculus has crumbled away and left a gap. I have restored according to a probable suggestion of Professor C. C. Torrey of Yale.

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* XVII, 4, 2 ff.; *Bell.* I, 30, 5 ff.

- (3) Over loculus 6 (see Fig. 2):

ΔΩCΙΘΕΟY

“(The grave) of Dositheus.”

This name was borne by one of the captains of Judas Maccabeus (2 *Macc.* 12:19, 24), and by other Jews of the same period (2 *Macc.* 12:35; 3 *Macc.* 1:3; *Esther* LXX, *Ad.* 11:1).

- (4) Over loculus 7 (see Fig. 2):

ANTIOXOY

“(The grave) of Antiochus.”

This was a common name in the Hellenistic period. (*Cf.* 1 *Macc.* 12:16; 14:22.)

- (5) Over loculus 9:

ΒΟΡΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΥ

βορ Διοδότου

“In the year 172. (The grave) of Diodotus.”

The real name of Trypho, the Syrian usurper who killed Jonathan Maccabeus, was Diodotus.

- (6) Over loculus 13 (just discernible at the extreme right of Fig. 2):

... ΙΑΟΥ

The rock upon which the left half of the inscription was written has broken away. Was a descendant of Antiphilus buried here?

- (7) Over loculus 15:

Δ alone could be read. There are faint traces of other letters.

- (8) Over loculus 19:

Traces of four letters.

- (9) Over loculus 21 (see Fig. 3):

ΕΤΟΥ ΑΣ
ΕΛΙΟΔΩΡΑ
ΤΗΚΙΝΕ

“Ετου[s] \overline{as} (?) ‘Η(?)λιωδώρα[s] τῆς Αινέ[ου](?)

“In the year 201. (The grave) of Heliodora the daughter of Aeneas.”

Several letters could not be read with certainty. The name Heliodorus occurs twice in the Painted Tombs.¹ Josephus men-

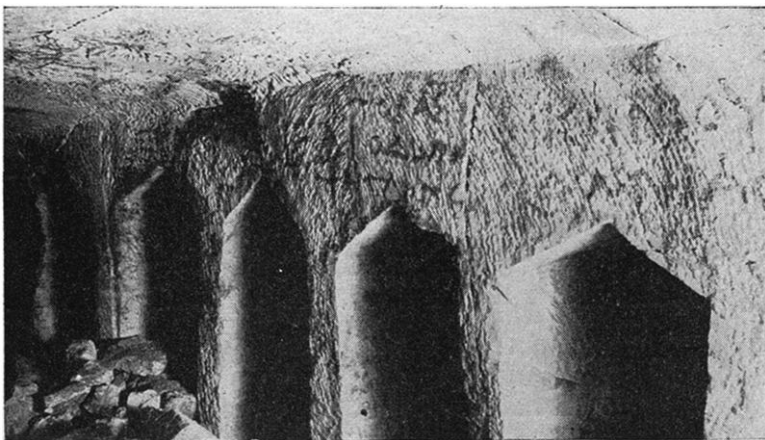


FIGURE 3.—INTERIOR OF TOMB

tions a Jew bearing the name Aeneas.² I have here again restored according to a suggestion of Professor Torrey.

(10) Over loculus 22 (see Fig. 3):

ΕΙΚΟΝΙΟΥ
ΣΙΔΩΝΙΑ

E(?)ικονίου(?) Σιδωνίας

"(The grave) of . . . the Sidonian woman."

With this inscription may be compared one that was discovered by Dr. Peters and Dr. Thiersch:

"(Grave) of Philotion, the Sidonian woman."³

(11) Over loculus 25:

ΑΠΟΛΛΟΔΩΡΟΥ

Υ
ΝΙΟΥ
ΧΑΝ

"(The grave) of Apollodorus."

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 53 and 64.

² *Antiq.* XIV, 10, 22; cf. also *Acts* 9:33.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 66, inscription 42.

Following the name Apollodorus, which makes up the first line, there are three additional lines of inscription of which only the concluding letters in each instance could be deciphered. This name occurs frequently in the Hellenistic period and was borne by at least three men who are commemorated in the tombs discovered by Dr. Peters and Dr. Thiersch.¹ In the present instance the length of the inscription, the position of the loculus, as well as the statement that Sabo was the daughter of Apollodorus, point to him as the head of the family that constructed the tomb.

There seems to be little reason to doubt that we have here a tomb of the Hellenistic period. Its style, the character of the inscriptions, and the names that can be deciphered with certainty, all point to this era.

The only pottery that could be found confirms the conclusion. It was the fragment of a long, narrow vase, without handles, probably an ointment-vessel. The form is known to be characteristic of the Hellenistic period.²

Three of the names as read are those of women. Little is indicated to establish family ties between the persons buried in the tomb except in the case of Sabo. The distance of her grave from that of Apollodorus suggests the use of the intervening loculi for other members of the immediate family.

It is probable that the Seleucid Era is used here, as is the case, for the most part, in the Painted Tombs. The date, 198 B.C., given in connection with the death of Antiphilus (2) is the earliest, whereas that of Sabo (1) falls two years later, in 196 B.C. (or, on the other reading, 116 B.C.). The date of the death of Diodotus, 141 B.C., is that which can be read with greatest certainty. Latest of all is the inscription of Heliodora (9) who died in 112 B.C. If these renderings are correct we have proof of the continued use of the tomb throughout the second century B.C. In general this corresponds to the period of the Painted Tombs where the extreme dates are 196 B.C. to 119 B.C. in the first instance, and 188 B.C. to 135 B.C. in the second.³

As has been pointed out in the course of the discussion, several of the names occurring there are also found here in the present tomb. They are written in the same crude script and with the

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 52, 54, 65, and 71.

² Cf. Macalister, *The Excavations of Gezer*, Vol. II, p. 215, h, 10.

³ *Op. cit.* pp. 76-80.

same brown mortar that was used there to some extent for a like purpose. These facts, together with the description of one woman as a Sidonian, make it probable that the tomb belonged to a circle of the same Sidonian colony, whose chief, Apollophanes, was buried in Painted Tomb I. This colony was doubtless planted in Marissa while Egypt was dominant in Palestine. The construction of the tomb may well have taken place toward the close of the third century B.C.¹

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¹ Cf. *op. cit.* pp. 12 and 13.